

## Special Contributions.

### SHOULD CHRISTIANS HOLD LEGISLATIVE OFFICES?

BY JACOB C. CASSEL.

The above question has been propounded to me. I shall however not assume to answer it either affirmatively, or negatively without a great deal of qualification on both sides.

In its generally accepted sense the term Christian is so broad that it would be difficult in this land of ours to secure a respectable legislature without including some at least who would call themselves Christians, and if we could elect one utterly without Christians in every sense of the term it is quite certain that we should not want it very long; it is therefore a self-evident fact that Christians of a higher or lower degree should hold legislative offices.

In its strictest sense the term is so narrow that it would be equally as difficult to secure a good sized legislature of "Simon pure" Christians from an average community, and if we could I fear it would be about as unsatisfactory as the one entirely without them. No man of pronounced religious convictions can represent popular sentiment and be true to his conscience at the same time. There always has been and always will be a wide difference between popular sentiment, and true religious sentiment; the two will not mix without violence to one or the other. Under popular, or representative government the legislator is supposed to sink his own convictions and enact laws in harmony with the public, or popular sentiment of his constituency. The "indian rubber" Christian can easily do this, but the one who feels that the Salvation of his soul depends upon a persistent adherence to his religious convictions would find it a difficult task. Then again the duties and offices of the true Christian, and legislator are so widely different that it is scarcely possible to combine the two. It is very largely the business of the legislator to enact penal laws; it is the business of the Christian to be engaged in the salvation of souls which can only be done by the power of love, not law. If an entire legislative body was made

up of all good and true Christians, and they should succeed in enacting the highest ideal of correct law, they would utterly fail to save a single soul by their law, and hence fail to accomplish the high aim of an ideal Christian life. The one who sincerely adopts the motto "for me to live is Christ, for me to die is gain" makes his whole life subservient to that one purpose by such a thorough consecration of his time and energies to the service of the Master that he will have neither time nor disposition to hold legislative office.

The kind of Christians that want public offices should be allowed to occupy them, if the people will elect them. We certainly want men to occupy our legislative halls who at least in a general way acknowledged the principles of Christianity in their broad sense, even if they do not subscribe to the dogmas of the churches, and I rather incline to the idea that this kind of Christians make more satisfactory legislators to all concerned, they can legislate for all creeds and classes in a general way without violating their principles, or consciences, they are therefore very useful public servants for mixed constituencies.

The motive with which a Christian may aspire to public office has a great deal to do with the right or wrong of it. If his object is human fame, or earthly glory it is pernicious in the sight of God, and the man would utterly fail in the achievement of his aim, as those honors only come to those that sacrifice themselves upon the altars of great principles. If he enters the arena of politics as a business, for the money there is in it, he cannot be true to his purpose and to his constituency both at the same time. There is more money in serving individual, and corporate interests than there is in legislating for the good of the people. If his motive is to expose corruption, and to exorcise all his powers and influences in legislating for the good of the people it is highly commendable, and the Lord have mercy on such a Christian if he is true to his purpose, the probability however is that politics would corrupt him long before he purified politics.

Notwithstanding all the legislative discrimination and corruption we are subjected to, from the borough council

to the United States Senate, we are comparatively a free, a happy, and a prosperous people, and as the Christians ideal of popular government can never be attained under the domination of the "prince of the power of the air." Christians had better spend their time and energies in the kingdom of grace which is sure to last, than in the vortex of politics which is sure to come to an end. Legislatures are purely worldly institutions from which the meek and lowly followers of Christ are to keep aloof as is proven by many of the precept of Christ and emphasized by Paul to Timothy when he says, "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this world." 2 Tim. ii, 4.

The careful reader will observe that in the writer's estimation a certain kind of Christians can and should hold both legislative and executive offices, and that there is another class that would not if they could; and further that it is an individual question, or a question of conscience, over which the church has no legal legislative jurisdiction, or prohibition power.

709 Arch St. Philadelphia.

## Sermon Outline.

### EATING THE FORBIDDEN FRUIT.

GEN. ii, 15-17.

#### INTRODUCTION.

1. The question is asked—sometimes seriously, sometimes skeptically—why were such great consequences suspended upon an act so apparently insignificant as eating some fruit.

2. Allowing this to be a trifling act, it would still argue nothing against the Divine origin of the prohibition, or the credibility of the story of "The Fall." History and every day experiences teach us that the greatest consequences are suspended upon what we might call most trifling acts.

(1) A child with all the promise of life eats a bunch of cherries at the cost of its life.

(2.) A widow, the mother of a large family of small children is about her ordinary duties; she gets her foot wet; takes sick; and death follows. The children are not only bereft of support; but—what is more—of a mother's loving care. They are at the mercy